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9/11 and the FBI: The Organizational Roots of Failure

AMY ZEGART

Public discussion about the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks has focused on the human causes of tragedy – on individual mistakes, failures of leadership, and the power plays between intelligence officers in the field and policymakers in Washington. But closer examination of the FBI suggests that organizational weaknesses are the root cause of poor agency performance. Longstanding deficiencies in the FBI's organizational structure, culture, and incentive systems proved crippling in the 1990s, when the Cold War ended and the terrorist threat emerged. These lingering weaknesses ultimately prevented the bureau from capitalizing on 12 separate opportunities that might have disrupted the 9/11 plot.

On the night of 11 September 2001, as the World Trade Center lay smoldering nearby, an anguished New York FBI agent tested a hunch.¹ He submitted the name of hijacker Khalid al-Mihdhar to the Bureau's information technology center to see what a search of public records would uncover. Within hours, the agent received al-Mihdhar's correct address in San Diego.²

Although the FBI had just 19 days to find al-Mihdhar and his colleague, Nawaf al-Hazmi, before they hijacked flight 77 and crashed it into the Pentagon, time was not the FBI's greatest impediment. The FBI was. It turns out that al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi were hiding in plain sight, using their real names on rental agreements, travel documents, bank accounts, credit cards, auto insurance, and telephone listings.³ The two terrorists also were operating right under the FBI's nose, living with an FBI informant⁴ and making contact with several targets of past and ongoing FBI counterterrorism investigations in San Diego over a period of several months.⁵ None of this information was known before 9/11, however, because the FBI was not searching for it. No FBI official ever asked the San Diego field office, or the Bureau's 55 other US field offices, to query informants or check records for connections to the

two operatives. Nobody asked the FBI's own white collar crime unit or the Treasury Department's financial crimes enforcement network to search their databases for credit card and bank information, steps that helped quickly identify nearly all of the 19 hijackers soon after the attacks.⁶ And nobody in the Bureau notified the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to include al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi in the FAA's August 2001 security directives which warned that terrorists might be traveling on commercial airlines and directed that anyone listed in the advisory be subjected to detailed searches of their persons, carry-on bags, and checked luggage before boarding.⁷ Instead, the manhunt for the two terrorists was assigned to a single FBI office, New York. It was designated a low priority intelligence investigation rather than a high priority criminal investigation. It was labeled 'routine',⁸ the lowest level of precedence.⁹ And it was given to a junior agent who had never led an intelligence investigation before.¹⁰ When al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi boarded the airplane on the morning of 11 September, the FBI was nowhere close to finding them.¹¹

What went wrong? At first glance, the answer appears to be just about everything. Probing more deeply, however, reveals that the keystone cops picture described above – with seemingly incompetent individuals making one bad decision after another – is misleading. The real picture is worse. The failed manhunt for the two hijackers was not an isolated mistake nor the result of individual errors, but the product of three deeper and more intractable organizational deficiencies: (1) structural weaknesses dating back decades that prevented the Intelligence Community from working as a coherent whole and kept the Bureau from knowing what it knew; (2) perverse promotion incentives that rewarded officials for all of the wrong things; and (3) cultural pathologies that led the FBI to resist new technologies, ideas and tasks. These organizational deficiencies prevented the Bureau from capitalizing on 12 separate opportunities to penetrate and possibly thwart the 11 September attacks.¹²

I turn first to organizational problems, examining the weaknesses in the FBI's structure, culture and incentive systems that arose during the Cold War and became debilitating in the 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed and a new terrorist threat emerged. Next, I detail the 12 specific opportunities that the Bureau had, and missed, to disrupt the 9/11 plot, and show how in each case, failures of performance stemmed from failures of organization. Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi began their journey by evading CIA surveillance abroad and ended it by escaping FBI detection at home. The two terrorists needed no fancy driving, fake names, or clever schemes to succeed. They needed only for the CIA and FBI to conduct business as usual. The crippling organizational weaknesses of both agencies during the 1990s left the United States vulnerable to catastrophic terrorist attack.

STRUCTURAL DEFICIENCIES: LEAVING GAPS, BUILDING FIEFDOMS

The FBI faced structural problems on two fronts. Externally, the Bureau was caught in an Intelligence Community that artificially divided intelligence responsibilities by geography, leaving huge gaps in coverage. The CIA and other agencies were responsible for tracking terrorists abroad, while the FBI was supposed to watch them at home. Nobody, however, was clearly responsible for monitoring the communications or movements of suspected terrorists *between* the United States and foreign countries. The result was that terrorists could operate seamlessly across borders but the US Intelligence Community could not.

The Bureau's traditional law enforcement mission exacerbated these gaps. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was established by US Attorney General Charles Bonaparte in 1908, nearly 40 years before the CIA, to investigate possible violations of US federal laws on US soil.¹³ Although the Bureau eventually assumed responsibility for counterintelligence and counterterrorism – rooting out foreign spies and terrorists operating inside the United States – and briefly collected intelligence in Latin America during World War II, FBI officials never considered intelligence their core business, and other officials never considered the FBI a major part of the Intelligence Community.¹⁴ Such views were understandable. Spies stole secrets, operated abroad, and worked in the shadows of the law; Hoover's special agents, by contrast, were supposed to catch criminals at home and operate in the light of day, granting suspects all of the liberties and procedural protections guaranteed by the US Constitution. The FBI was considered so peripheral to intelligence that, before 9/11, the CIA neglected to put the Attorney General on its distribution list for the President's Daily Brief, the most important Community-wide current intelligence report.¹⁵

At the same time, the Bureau's internal structure was highly decentralized, with power concentrated in 56 local field offices, each run by a Special Agent-In-Charge (SAC).¹⁶ Field offices existed from the Bureau's inception.¹⁷ But it was legendary Director J. Edgar Hoover who expanded and institutionalized the field office system during his 47-year reign. Between 1924 and his death in 1972, Hoover initiated the practice of evaluating field office performance based on quantifiable statistics such as the number of arrests and convictions produced. He standardized forms and processes across the different field offices. And the FBI Director held SACs directly accountable for the work and mistakes of their subordinates.¹⁸ By the 1990s, field office primacy had become so engrained that some joked the FBI consisted of '56 field offices with a headquarters attached'.¹⁹ It is fair to say that when the Cold War ended, the FBI was less a single agency than 56

loosely connected agencies, each of which set its own priorities, assigned its own personnel, ran its own cases, followed its own orders, and guarded its own information.²⁰ As former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh put it, the FBI's traditional system was one of 'decentralized management of localized cases'.²¹

Such a structure was well suited for prosecuting individual criminal cases and responding to local law enforcement priorities throughout the Cold War. But it was poorly designed for managing a coordinated national counterterrorism program. After 9/11, the FBI admitted that its traditional field office structure 'had a number of failings'. Among them, information tended to become 'stove-piped' in individual offices rather than pooled or assessed in a coordinated fashion; offices could (and did) pursue their own cases and ignore national priorities such as counterterrorism; and the system left even senior FBI officials in the dark, unaware of what their own agents knew or did and unable to coordinate FBI activities with other US government agencies.²²

CULTURAL PATHOLOGIES

Grafted onto these structural weaknesses was a law enforcement culture that had taken root during eight decades spent pursuing the same mission. Everything in the Bureau, from the photographs of award-winning agents placed outside the director's office to new agent training programs, reinforced the idea that agents were supposed to be reactive, case driven, and conviction oriented, working cases one by one and protecting information for use in trial. Indeed, even throughout the 1990s, the bureau continued to give its most important reward, recognition, overwhelmingly to agents steeped in the bureau's traditional law enforcement mission. Between 1992 and 2001, 92 FBI officials received Presidential Rank Awards, the federal government's highest civil service honor. The vast majority of recipients were recognized for their accomplishments in criminal investigations. Only 14 awards went to officials involved in counterterrorism and counterintelligence, and the majority of these recognized outstanding reactive work – investigating past attacks and events – rather than proactive efforts to prevent future tragedy.²³

Here, too, J. Edgar Hoover left an indelible imprint. For decades, Hoover worked assiduously to develop a culture and image of FBI agents as men of action, both inside and outside the Bureau. Hoover became a public relations machine, offering cooperation only with those producers and reporters who portrayed the FBI in a positive light.²⁴ By the 1930s, Hoover's G-men appeared on everything from bubble gum cards to the big screen.²⁵ In 1935 alone, 65 movies featured the FBI. All of them glorified FBI agents as intrepid heroes, guns in hand, who worked the streets to solve crimes and always got their man.²⁶ This image took strong hold inside the FBI as well.

For an ambitious FBI agent, the goal was to work a criminal case, not sit behind a desk. One unintentional consequence of this action culture was an aversion to technology and analysis – an aversion that would prove disastrous during the 1990s. After the 9/11 attacks, one veteran agent described the prevailing old-school FBI attitude as, ‘real men don’t type. The only thing a real agent needs is a notebook, a pen and gun, and with those three things you can conquer the world’.²⁷

For years, this law enforcement orientation served the Bureau well. The problem came when the Cold War ended and counterterrorism required a radically different approach. Suddenly, agents who had devoted careers to investigating past tragedies were supposed to prevent them. Officials were expected to work across cases rather than within them. An organization geared to guarding information was now supposed to share it. And the most highly prized result was no longer a conviction, but a non-result: the absence of terrorist attack. The Bureau’s new counterterrorism mission required radical shifts in how everyone from street agents to senior officials viewed their jobs. It was all too much, too fast. When the terrorist threat emerged, the law enforcement culture that had been one of the FBI’s greatest strengths became one of its greatest liabilities.

MISPLACED INCENTIVES

Organizational incentives reinforced these cultural pathologies, encouraging agents to focus on traditional criminal work instead of counterterrorism and spend their time solving individual cases rather than analyzing broad trends. As one blue-ribbon commission noted in 2005, ‘Law enforcement work has long been the surest route to professional advancement within the Bureau’.²⁸ It did not take much for new FBI agents to realize that criminal cases offered the fast track to success. The Bureau’s new agent training course devoted just 28 out of 680 hours to counterintelligence and counterterrorism.²⁹ Resources overwhelmingly supported criminal work at the expense of counterterrorism. And plum assignments such as managing FBI field offices far more often went to agents from the Criminal Division than anywhere else.³⁰ As one former FBI agent put it, ‘Counterintelligence and counterterrorism was a dumping area for problem children in the late 80s and early 90s’.³¹

Incentives also discouraged analysis. Because success was determined primarily by criminal case statistics, analysts were considered second-class citizens, non-essential employees who could be transferred away from strategic analysis to do just about anything that supported case work, including answering phones and emptying the trash.³² Before 9/11, FBI personnel policies expressly prohibited analysts from being promoted to senior positions.³³ The Bureau had no dedicated career path for analysts.³⁴

Nor did it have any 'professional reports officers', positions that were considered vital in intelligence, to assess and disseminate information from the FBI to other agencies.³⁵ As an old FBI joke put it, there were only two kinds of people in the Bureau: agents and furniture.

At the same time, the Bureau's computer inadequacies made it extremely costly for agents to conduct their own analysis. As the 9/11 Commission concluded in a staff statement, 'The FBI did not have an effective system for storing, searching, or retrieving information of intelligence value contained in its investigative files'.³⁶ With billions of records kept in paper files,³⁷ computers so old that it took 12 commands to store a single document,³⁸ different databases that could not perform integrated searches,³⁹ and email so unreliable that messages often went unread,⁴⁰ even agents interested in connecting the dots between cases could not make headway easily.

In sum, when the Cold War ended in 1991, the FBI was a fully developed, 83-year-old organization with a well defined and stable law enforcement mission codified by law, a highly decentralized field office structure, and a powerful organizational culture that prized loyalty and action above analysis and technology.

THE MANHUNT REVISITED

These organizational weaknesses go a long way toward explaining why the FBI conducted such a half-hearted effort to find al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi 19 days before 9/11. From the outset, the Bureau's decentralized structure ensured that what should have been a nationwide effort was instead the focus of a handful of people in a single FBI office. This particular case was not bungled. It was handled like every other: assigned to a lead FBI field office for investigation with little central oversight or coordination from headquarters.⁴¹

Culture also played an important role. It turns out that the FBI analyst who requested the manhunt actually believed the matter had some urgency. She was so worried about finding al-Mihdhar, in fact, that she called an agent in New York's bin Laden squad to alert him even before finishing her formal request. This was something she had never done before.⁴² A few days later, she sent him an e-mail urging, 'I ... want to get this going as soon as possible'.⁴³ In addition, when another counterterrorism agent pressed to have the manhunt opened as a full-scale, high priority criminal investigation, she explicitly considered the matter and sought legal advice. Yet she ultimately assigned the manhunt the lowest possible priority: a 'routine' intelligence case. Why?

The answer lies in pervasive attitudes and beliefs, not individual errors. Like nearly all FBI officials, the analyst believed that criminal investigations –

which are designed to solve past crimes – took precedence over intelligence investigations designed to gather information about possible future attacks. After 9/11, the analyst told Justice Department officials that although she considered finding al-Mihdhar to be important, this investigation was ‘no bigger’ than any other intelligence investigation at the time.⁴⁴ Good instincts led the analyst to take unusual steps to expedite the search, but old attitudes prevailed: when pressed to prioritize the manhunt relative to the Bureau’s traditional law enforcement work, she put down ‘routine’.

Culture also explains why the analyst mistakenly designated the manhunt an intelligence investigation. Here the question involved ‘the wall’, a set of laws and internal guidelines that regulated information sharing between two types of counterterrorism cases: criminal investigations seeking prosecution for specific past attacks and intelligence investigations seeking information about potential future attacks. In reality, the legal barriers to passing information across this divide were low. However, over time, the Bureau’s penchant for protecting information for trial had twisted reality, fostering the widespread belief that criminal and intelligence cases had to remain separate. In August 2001, the FBI analyst, her supervisor, and an FBI legal expert all believed that they were not allowed to authorize a full scale criminal investigation to find the terrorists because the original tip about al-Mihdhar had come through intelligence channels.⁴⁵ They were wrong.⁴⁶ And they were not alone. Attorney General Janet Reno told the 9/11 Commission that information sharing problems throughout her tenure were rampant, severe, and stemmed from ‘agency culture and lack of understanding’.⁴⁷

Incentives, finally, made everything worse. Although the New York field office had unparalleled experience in terrorism cases, even there most resources went to investigating past attacks, not thwarting future plots. From October 2000 to June 2001, all but one of the agents in the office’s Osama bin Laden squad were designated criminal agents who sought to prosecute terrorists for crimes that had already occurred.⁴⁸ This left just one person in the FBI’s leading counterterrorism office to investigate information about all future Al Qaeda plots. It was not considered an attractive assignment. The agent described himself as the squad’s ‘leper’, and was overwhelmed with work.⁴⁹ By 29 August 2001, when New York officially opened its investigation of al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi, a second intelligence agent had joined the squad. He had just finished his rookie year in the Bureau, had spent less than eight weeks on the bin Laden unit, and had never led an intelligence investigation before.⁵⁰ This junior agent was tapped for the manhunt because of his inexperience, not despite it. In an organization where convictions made careers, finding and interviewing two potential terrorists went to one of the office’s least experienced investigators because it was one of the least desirable jobs.

In short, the Bureau's structure, culture, and incentive system made it unlikely that al-Mihdhar or al-Hazmi would be found. The decentralized field office structure guaranteed that the alarm would be sounded in only one place. The FBI's law enforcement culture ensured that the alarm would be muffled by criminal cases and priorities. And incentives promised that those with the least experience and expertise would be answering the call.

These same organizational problems prevented the FBI from capitalizing on 11 other opportunities between July and September 2001.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES 2 AND 3: THE PHOENIX MEMO

In May 2001, a veteran FBI agent named Kenneth Williams began reading old files to get up to speed for his new counterterrorism assignment in Phoenix. He became increasingly alarmed by what he found: a large number of Islamic extremists enrolling in Arizona flight schools. Williams himself had interviewed one of them a year earlier, in April 2000. The subject had a poster of Osama bin Laden in his apartment and said he considered the United States government to be a legitimate target of Islam.⁵¹ By the summer of 2001, Agent Williams realized that his subject was not an isolated case. On 10 July, he sent a memo to six officials at FBI headquarters⁵² and two agents on different international terrorism squads in the FBI's New York field office⁵³ warning that he believed 'a coordinated effort by Usama bin Laden (UBL)' was underway 'to send students to the United States to attend civil aviation universities and colleges'.⁵⁴ The memo discussed ten individuals who were the subject of FBI investigations.⁵⁵ It also recommended that the Bureau begin compiling lists of civil aviation colleges in the United States, establish relationships with those schools, consider seeking authority to obtain visa information about foreign flight school students, and, most importantly, discuss the issue with other intelligence agencies so that they could gather additional information.⁵⁶

The Phoenix memo produced two missed opportunities. The first was the chance to alert and engage a broader circle of FBI and intelligence officials about the terrorist threat two months before the attacks. Although the memo contained no direct warning of the 9/11 plot, it was a timely and outstanding piece of strategic analysis that reached across cases, noticed a disturbing pattern with potentially serious implications for US national security, and recommended specific next steps to involve additional FBI field offices and other US intelligence agencies. Instead of reaching a wide array of people and triggering additional intelligence collection and analysis, however, the memo went nowhere and did nothing. The Congressional Joint Inquiry found that Williams' memo 'generated little or no interest' at either FBI headquarters or the New York office.⁵⁷ It was sent to just one FBI field office, Portland,

because one of the ten suspects had a connection to a local case.⁵⁸ It was never forwarded to any managers at FBI headquarters, the CIA, or any other intelligence agency.⁵⁹ As FBI Director Mueller admitted, 'the Phoenix memo should have been disseminated to all field offices and to our sister agencies, and it should have triggered a broader analytic approach'.⁶⁰

Second, the primary person named in the Phoenix memo turned out to be an associate of hijacker Hani Hanjour, but he was never investigated before 9/11. FBI officials now believe that the two men trained in the same Arizona flight school beginning as early as 1997, continued meeting there at least until 2000, and may have reconnected in June 2001 as part of the 9/11 operation.⁶¹ But for bureaucratic reasons discussed below, this connection to the plot was never pursued before the attacks. The suspect was singled out in the Phoenix memo and then lost.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES 4 AND 5: ZACARIAS MOUSSAOUI

One month later, the FBI missed perhaps its best chance to derail the 9/11 attacks when Minneapolis field agents arrested a French citizen of Moroccan descent named Zacarias Moussaoui. Moussaoui has since admitted to being a member of Al Qaeda, in April 2005 pleaded guilty to six counts of conspiracy to commit terrorism in the 9/11 plot, and in 2006 was sentenced to life in prison, becoming the only person convicted in the United States in connection with the attacks.⁶²

The lucky break came on Wednesday, 15 August 2001, when an employee of the Pan American International Flight School called the local Minneapolis FBI field office about a suspicious foreign student who had paid more than \$6000 in cash for training on a Boeing 747 flight simulator but lacked all of the usual qualifications – including a pilot's license – and seemed unusually interested in the operation of the plane's doors, take-offs and landings.⁶³ Minneapolis field agents immediately opened an intelligence investigation, interviewed Moussaoui, and concluded that he, along with 'others yet unknown' were probably plotting to seize control of an aircraft.⁶⁴ They were right. But they then made two crucial errors. First, instead of initiating surveillance of Moussaoui, agents quickly arrested him, losing a potentially valuable opportunity to uncover intelligence about the plot. As 11 September neared and the hijacking teams converged for their flights, Moussaoui was sitting in a Minnesota jail.

Second, Minneapolis field agents spent the next four weeks on a wild goose chase trying to get a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to search Moussaoui's belongings.⁶⁵ They failed because they were operating in near total isolation and because FBI officials in both Minneapolis and headquarters misunderstood the legal

requirements for investigating a suspected terrorist who had not yet committed a crime.

Whether different actions could have resulted in different outcomes will never be known. However, this much is clear: when officials searched Moussaoui's belongings after 9/11, they found substantial evidence connecting him to Ramzi Binalshibh, one of the core planners of the 9/11 plot;⁶⁶ nobody on the Moussaoui case knew about the Phoenix memo which could have expedited the warrant and raised questions about a broader Al Qaeda operation;⁶⁷ and one other FBI field office had a terrorist in custody who could have quickly identified Moussaoui as an Al Qaeda member before 11 September, but was never asked.⁶⁸

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 AND 12: PULSING THE SYSTEM AND PUTTING PIECES TOGETHER

Finally, the FBI missed at least seven opportunities throughout the summer of 2001 to pulse the system and put the pieces together. In each case, the threat of a domestic terrorist attack caught the attention of someone somewhere in the FBI, but failed to trigger a broader effort to collect information, share information, or take stock of what the FBI already knew.

The first opportunity arose on 2 July, when the FBI's Counterterrorism Division warned other federal agencies, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies, that terrorist attacks in the US could not be discounted and recommended that personnel 'exercise extreme vigilance' and 'report specific activities' to the FBI.⁶⁹ Apparently, however, no plans were made inside the FBI to do anything with that information. Three days later, on 5 July, FBI officials attended a special White House briefing for domestic security agencies about terrorist threat reporting, but took no follow-up steps to query field offices, meet with informants, or check case files to assess what agents across the Bureau might know.⁷⁰ A third chance came on 10 July, when Phoenix Special Agent Kenneth Williams sent his now-famous memo to headquarters and the New York office warning that bin Laden might be sending Al Qaeda operatives for US flight training. Although Williams asked FBI officials to share his ideas with other US intelligence agencies and take further steps to uncover links between Al Qaeda and US flight schools, the memo triggered no action. Next, on a 19 July conference call with all 56 FBI field office heads, FBI Acting Director Thomas Pickard discussed the heightened terrorist threat level, but instead of asking for information or analysis about potential plots, he asked all field offices to have their evidence teams ready to deploy after an attack.⁷¹ Pickard telephoned field office heads again between 9 and 31 July to discuss their performance evaluations.⁷² Once more, he discussed the need to focus on terrorism. Again, however, he

directed no proactive investigatory or analytic efforts. The vast majority of field office personnel said they did not perceive any sense of urgency.⁷³ Next, on 15 August, news of the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui was deemed important enough to reach the Director of Central Intelligence, but was never disseminated to FBI field offices or relayed to senior officials in the FBI's own Counterterrorism Division.⁷⁴ Finally, on 23 August, when headquarters officials learned that suspected Al Qaeda operatives Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi had probably entered the United States, no steps were taken to determine whether the two might be connected to a broader network or plot.

At each of these junctures, various officials inside the FBI had pieces of information that could have prompted a more concerted investigation but did not. Field offices were not directed to review files or contact informants for possible clues to a terrorist plot. Analysts were not tasked to assess what the FBI knew. Terrorists in custody were not canvassed. Surveillance was not initiated. Resources were not marshaled. Personnel were not alerted. The result was that threads went unnoticed and unconnected. To be sure, the threads were not ubiquitous or easy to follow. However, the Congressional Joint Inquiry concluded that the 9/11 hijackers had numerous links to a broader Al Qaeda support network inside the United States that had already attracted the FBI's attention. Specifically, five of the hijackers – Khalid al-Mihdhar, Nawaf al-Hazmi, Hani Hanjour, Mohamed Atta, and Marwan al-Shehhi – may have had links to as many as 14 extremists known to the FBI. Four of the 14 were the targets of active FBI counterterrorism investigations while the hijackers were in the United States.⁷⁵ To give just a few examples: one previous target of an FBI counterterrorism investigation housed al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi, co-signed their lease, and held a welcome party for them in San Diego;⁷⁶ another extremist who was the subject of an active FBI investigation hired al-Hazmi to work for him;⁷⁷ a third, a local imam named Anwar Aulaqi⁷⁸ who was the target of an FBI counterterrorism inquiry at the time, became al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar's spiritual advisor in San Diego, and reconnected with al-Hazmi in Virginia in the spring of 2001.⁷⁹ These and other links, however, were never uncovered before 11 September because the FBI never mobilized a coordinated effort to find them.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL ROOTS OF FAILURE

Organizational deficiencies prevented the FBI from capitalizing on all of these opportunities. First, structural fragmentation created an invisible barrier between terrorist investigations at home and abroad that kept one of the FBI's best agents from following one of the most promising 9/11 leads. In the summer of 2001, Phoenix Special Agent Kenneth Williams was onto

something. He had detected a coordinated terrorist effort to train pilots in the US, sent word to headquarters, identified a prime suspect who, it turns out, had ties to 9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour, and opened an investigation on him. But because the suspected terrorist happened to be outside the United States at the time, the case was quickly closed. What is more, Agent Williams never knew that the suspect soon returned to the United States. The reason: once FBI targets traveled outside the country, they were considered somebody else's responsibility. Standard FBI operating procedures discouraged agents from investigating suspects outside the United States and provided no mechanisms for coordinating with other US border agencies to notify FBI agents when suspects returned. Structural fragmentation ensured that the trail would go cold.⁸⁰

The FBI's decentralized field office structure proved even more crippling. Within a seven-week period, three different field offices uncovered leads to the plot. Phoenix identified a connection between bin Laden and flight schools, Minneapolis arrested a suspicious Jihadist who wanted to fly 747s, and New York began searching for two suspected Al Qaeda operatives. Because of the autonomous field office structure, however, none of agents working these cases knew about the others,⁸¹ and most of the FBI's 53 other field offices did not either.⁸² As a result, tantalizing clues surfaced, only to disappear again. Moussaoui's belongings went unsearched when a terrorist in custody could have identified him from Al Qaeda's Afghan training camps. A New York agent began searching for al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi in New York Marriott Hotels,⁸³ completely unaware that the San Diego field office had an informant and several other subjects of past and open counterterrorism investigations who knew both operatives.

These and other dots were never connected because the FBI's organization was designed to keep them apart. FBI field offices were built and expected to work independently, not together. They were designed to pursue individual cases in discrete jurisdictions, not broad plots that spanned the country. And they were given broad latitude to operate independently, with little direction or oversight from headquarters. This decentralized structure was optimally suited for the FBI's old mission, giving agents great independence to solve criminal cases one by one. For counterterrorism, however, it was a setup for disaster.

The FBI's law enforcement culture also proved debilitating. In all of the missed opportunities described above, FBI officials from top to bottom made the same kinds of mistakes for the same reasons. They pursued specific cases without considering broad trends, favored reaction over prevention, and sought to protect information for trial rather than share it. Officials in headquarters and New York dismissed the Phoenix's memo's strategic analysis because it offered little help with current investigations. Director

Pickard urged field offices to be ready to respond to an attack, but never said anything about taking steps to prevent one. A Minneapolis field agent arrested Zacarias Moussaoui because all of his Criminal Division experience told him that arresting a suspect would stop the illegal activity – in his words, it would ‘freeze the situation’.⁸⁴ It seems the agent never seriously considered the possibility that Moussaoui was more valuable under surveillance than in jail or that arresting him would freeze the FBI more than the enemy. Finally, officials throughout the Bureau misunderstood and misapplied information sharing rules – delaying the Moussaoui warrant and depriving the manhunt of critical resources – because they were steeped in a culture that erred on the side of protecting information so that it could be used in court. The FBI missed all of these clues to 9/11 because most officials were viewing events during the summer of 2001 as they always had: through law enforcement lenses.

Incentives reinforced the worst aspects of FBI culture, encouraging officials to put traditional criminal cases before counterterrorism and operational priorities ahead of strategic analysis. For agents interested in rising up the ranks, the key was closing criminal cases, not pondering possible terrorist attacks. As a result, the best agents usually avoided counterterrorism and the best counterterrorism agents usually avoided doing strategic analysis. As Agent Williams told Congress, he realized his Phoenix memo would most likely go to ‘the bottom of the pile’, because it dealt with the lowest of the Bureau’s priorities: longer term analysis in counterterrorism.⁸⁵

Had the memo gone to the top of the pile, moreover, there were no analysts capable of doing much with it. By the summer of 2001, years of personnel policies that relegated analysts to support staff and prevented them from being promoted to senior ranks had taken their toll. The Bureau’s strategic analysis unit was ‘on its last legs’,⁸⁶ with poor quality products and just one strategic analyst assigned to handle everything related to Al Qaeda.⁸⁷ Other pieces of information were not put together in the summer of 2001 for the same reason: thanks to career incentives, there were very few people who could do the job, and even fewer who could do it well.⁸⁸ As FBI Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Dale Watson later told Congress, he found not one instance where FBI analysts produced ‘an actual product that helped out’.⁸⁹

At the same time, incentives discouraged field agents from connecting the dots on their own because the Bureau’s obsolete information technology systems made any search for information exceedingly difficult, time consuming, and ineffective. When Agent Williams wrote his Phoenix memo, for example, he was unaware that the FBI had issued several earlier reports expressing similar concerns about terrorists studying at US flight schools because the FBI had no central, user-friendly database to search for relevant

cases or reports.⁹⁰ Indeed, many agents found FBI computer systems so unreliable that they stopped using them altogether.⁹¹ These technology problems made a bad situation worse. Case agents were already inclined by culture and career advancement to eschew broader analysis and concentrate on individual cases. The Bureau's antiquated technology meant that undertaking cross-case analysis would require a superhuman effort.

CONCLUSION

Everyone has someone to blame for 9/11. Democrats such as former Clinton National Security Advisor Samuel Berger and Secretary of State Madeline Albright have faulted President Bush and his administration for giving terrorism short shrift compared to missile defense and other foreign policy issues.⁹² Republicans, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Richard Cheney, have charged the Clinton Administration with failing to develop an effective counterterrorism strategy and emboldening bin Laden by responding weakly to earlier terrorist attacks.⁹³ Some, such as former Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Alabama), have laid responsibility squarely on the shoulders of George Tenet, who served as director of central intelligence from 1997 to 2004.⁹⁴ Although different accusers have found different culprits, their point is the same: individual leadership failures are the root cause of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.

Attributing failure to individuals is both understandable and dangerous. Casting blame after moments of great tragedy is a natural human response, makes for good politics, and produces great journalism. No one should be surprised that politicians from both parties rushed to accuse and defend, and the press rushed to cover them. Even the cottage industry of 9/11 books penned by journalists since the attacks has focused almost exclusively on the human causes of tragedy, examining the power plays and personalities of intelligence officers in the field and policymakers in Washington.⁹⁵ While these accounts have something to offer, they invariably place individuals at the heart of the story rather than examining the forces that transcend them. They rely on anecdotal evidence rather than studying a single problem in systematic detail over a number of years. And they tend to gravitate to 'smoking guns' – a 1995 report sent to the CIA from Philippine authorities noting that a captured terrorist had plans to fly an airplane into CIA headquarters,⁹⁶ or an Al Qaeda telephone call intercepted during the summer of 2001 that mentions a 'terrifying' attack using an airplane⁹⁷ – which provide ominous and obvious warnings only in retrospect.

Highlighting the role of individuals is also dangerous because it suggests the wrong causes of failure and the wrong remedies to address them. We are

left to think that if only the right people had been listened to, if only a few important officials had connected a few obvious dots, if only more inside the corridors of power had had their hair on fire, tragedy could have been averted. As Bob Woodward, the dean of journalistic non-fiction, once wrote: 'Decision making at the highest levels of national government is a complex human interaction... This human story is the core.'⁹⁸

Actually, the human story is the problem. What is missing from these accounts is a sense of context, of the underlying constraints and forces that make it likely talented people will make poor decisions. It is easy, for example, to blame intelligence officials for overlooking warnings about a terrorist attack in an intercepted telephone conversation. It is much harder when one considers that several million such conversations are intercepted by intelligence officials every day of every week of every year.⁹⁹ Journalists, the old saying goes, write the first draft of history. In the case of 9/11, however, journalists have provided the *only* draft of history. The result is that the role of individuals in 9/11 has been grossly overstated, while the organizational causes of failure have gone largely unexamined.

My point is not that individual leadership never matters, but that the harder-to-see aspects of organizational life – such as training, procedures, cultures, and agency structures – often matter more. This is important both for our understanding of the past and our expectations of the future. Indeed, if individual leadership determined counterterrorism success and failure, then fixing US intelligence agencies would be easy. One need only identify the few bad apples and toss, or vote, them out. The reality is much worse. Yes, individuals made mistakes, but it was the system that failed us. The FBI had 12 known chances to follow leads that hinted at impending disaster. It missed them all. With FBI agents keeping case files in shoeboxes rather than putting them into computers, field offices running their own cases rather than working together, and even senior Bureau officials viewing the threat through reactive lenses, the FBI did not have a fighting chance.

NOTES

The material in this article is excerpted from *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

- 1 The same agent authored the 29 August 2001 email to FBI headquarters warning that 'Someday someone will die... and... the public will not understand why we were not more effective and throwing every resource we had' at counterterrorism. The agent is never identified by name because of his continuing involvement in sensitive counterterrorism activities. The *OIG Report* refers to him as a New York Office FBI agent named 'Scott'. At his appearance before the House and Senate Intelligence Committees' Joint hearing on 20 September 2002, the agent was shielded by a screen to protect his identity. In his testimony, however, the agent noted that he had served in the military between 1985 and 1993, and

- joined the FBI in 1995, where he was assigned to the New York Field Office's Joint Terrorism Task Force. His assignments included the TWA Flight 800 investigation and the 1998 African Embassy bombings investigation. In 1999, he joined the New York Field Office's Osama bin Laden case squad. Between October 2000 and 11 September 2001, he was investigating the bombing of the USS *Cole*. Office of the Inspector General, US Department of Justice, *A Review of the FBI's Handling of Intelligence Information Related to the September 11 Attacks*, November 2004, redacted and unclassified June 2005 (hereafter *OIG Report*). HPSCI and SSCI Joint Inquiry hearing, 107th Cong., 2d. sess., 20 September 2002 (hereafter *Joint Inquiry Report*).
- 2 Testimony by FBI agent before House and Senate Intelligence Committees, 'Panel II: The Malaysia Hijackers and September 11th', 107th Cong., 2d sess., 20 September 2002. Note: the FBI agent's identity was not revealed during these hearings because of his ongoing involvement in sensitive counterterrorism investigations.
 - 3 *OIG Report*, p.248.
 - 4 *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.157–68. According to the *OIG Report*, al-Mihdhar stayed at the informant's residence from May to 10 June 2000, and al-Hazmi lived in the informant's residence from May to 10 December 2000. *OIG Report*, pp.248, 252.
 - 5 *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.27–8, 168–80; *OIG Report*, pp.248–9.
 - 6 *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.115.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, p.15.
 - 8 *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (hereafter *9/11 Commission Report*) (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), p.270.
 - 9 FBI agents request assistance or information by sending documents that are called 'leads'. In order to prioritize work, leads are typically assigned one of three precedence levels: 'Immediate', 'Priority' and 'Routine'. According to the FBI's investigative manual, 'immediate' precedence should be used 'when the addressee(s) must take prompt action or have an urgent need for the information'. Priority precedence should be used when information is needed within 24 hours. Routine precedence, by contrast, has no timeframe associated with it and is supposed to be used when information is needed in the normal course of business. *OIG Report*, pp.56–7.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, pp.345–6; *9/11 Commission Report*, pp.271–2.
 - 11 For details about the FBI's search for al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi, see *OIG Report*, pp.295–304.
 - 12 The existence of these organizational deficiencies and the urgent need to fix them was no secret in Washington before the 9/11 attacks. For an analysis of failed intelligence reforms from 1991 to 2001, see Amy B. Zegart, 'An Empirical Analysis of Failed Intelligence Reforms Before September 11th', *Political Science Quarterly* 121/1 (Spring 2006), pp.33–60. For a fuller discussion of the systemic barriers that prevented the FBI and CIA from adapting to the rising terrorist threat after the Cold War, see Amy B. Zegart, 'September 11 and the Adaptation Failure of U.S. Intelligence Agencies', *International Security* 29/4 (Spring 2005), pp.78–111.
 - 13 The Federal Bureau of Investigation, 'Origins, 1908–1910', *FBI History*, <<http://www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/history/text.htm#origins>> (accessed 12 December 2005). For jurisdiction see the US Code, which authorizes the Attorney General to 'appoint officials to detect... crimes against the United States'. U.S. Code 28 (1966) § 533.
 - 14 In 1940 President Roosevelt signed an order creating a 'Special Intelligence Service' (SIS) within the FBI. During the war, more than 340 SIS agents and staff worked undercover in Latin America collecting intelligence about Axis spy and sabotage activities. The SIS was disbanded after the war ended and its responsibilities were assumed by the newly created Central Intelligence Agency. For more see <<http://www.fbi.gov/page2/june05/history062405.htm>> (accessed 8 November 2006).
 - 15 'Threats and Responses in 2001', *9/11 Commission Staff Statement Number 10*, 13 April 2004, p.5.
 - 16 There are three exceptions. The FBI's three largest offices, which are located in Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, DC, are run by Assistant Directors-in-Charge (ADICs), with program-oriented SACs reporting to them. See Todd Masse and William Krouse,

- 'The FBI: Past, Present, and Future', Congressional Research Service Report RL 32095, 2 October 2003, pp.13–14.
- 17 The Federal Bureau of Investigation, 'Early Days (1910–1921)', *FBI History*, <<http://www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/history/text.htm#early>> (accessed 12 January 2005).
 - 18 Ronald Kessler, *The Bureau: The Secret History of the FBI* (New York: St. Martin's, 2003), pp.21–6; Todd Masse and William Krouse, 'The FBI: Past, Present, and Future', *Congressional Research Service Report* RL32095, 2 October 2003; Federal Bureau of Investigation, *History of the FBI*, <<http://www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/history/text.htm#origins>> (accessed 13 July 2006).
 - 19 Interview with former FBI official, October 2005.
 - 20 For more about FBI field office autonomy before the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, see *9/11 Commission Report*, p.74.
 - 21 Richard Thornburgh, 'FBI Reorganization', statement before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary, 108th cong., 1st sess., 18 June 2003, p.2, <<http://www.napawash.org/resources/testimony/FBITestimony%2006-18-03.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2006).
 - 22 Federal Bureau of Investigation, *The FBI's Counterterrorism Program Since September 2001: Report to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*, 14 April 2004, p.20.
 - 23 Based on textual analysis of Presidential Rank Award citations in annual FBI award programs, 1992–2001. Collection of author.
 - 24 Kessler, *The Bureau*, pp.44–6.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, p.44.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, p.44.
 - 27 Quoted in Eric Lichtblau and Charles Piller, 'Without a Clue: How the FBI Lost Its Way', *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 11 August 2002, p.01J.
 - 28 The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (the Silberman–Robb Commission), 'Report to the President of the United States' (Washington, DC: GPO, 31 March 2005), p.455 (hereafter *Silberman–Robb Commission Report*), <http://www.wmd.gov/report/wmd_report.pdf> (accessed 15 February 2006), p.453.
 - 29 Alfred Cumming and Todd Masse, 'FBI Intelligence Reform Since September 11, 2001: Issues and Options for Congress', Congressional Research Service Report No. RL 32336, 6 April 2004, <<http://www.Fas.org/irp/crs/RL32336.html>> (accessed 27 February 2006), pp.14–15.
 - 30 The Silberman–Robb Commission, for example, found that in 2005, only nine of the 56 heads of field offices came from divisions other than the Criminal Division. *Silberman–Robb Commission Report*, p.453. See also 'Law Enforcement, Counterterrorism, and Intelligence Collection in the United States Prior to 9/11', *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No.9*, 13 April 2004, p.8.
 - 31 Interview, December 2004.
 - 32 *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.331–339; *Silberman–Robb Commission Report*, p.455; 'Law Enforcement, Counterterrorism, and Intelligence Collection in the United States Prior to 9/11', *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No. 9*, 13 April 2004, p.9; 'Reforming Law Enforcement, Counterterrorism, and Intelligence Collection in the United States', *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No.12*, 14 April 2004, p.6.
 - 33 Cumming and Masse, p.13.
 - 34 *Ibid.*, p.13.
 - 35 *OIG Report*, pp.89–91.
 - 36 *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No.9*, p.9.
 - 37 Louis Freeh, 'Fiscal Year 2002 Appropriations', hearing of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary, hearing, 107th Cong., 1st sess., 17 May 2001.
 - 38 Federal Bureau of Investigation, 'The FBI's Counterterrorism Program Since September 2001', *Report to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, 14 April 2004, p.51.

- 39 Shane Harris, 'Rebooting the Bureau', *Government Executive.com*, 1 August 2002.
- 40 Several FBI officials who were sent Kenneth Williams' Phoenix memo, for example, told Congressional investigators that they never received the electronic communication. See Eleanor Hill, staff statement, 'The FBI's Handling of the Phoenix Electronic Communication and Investigation of Zacarias Moussaoui Prior to September 11, 2001', 24 September 2002, supplemented 17 October 2002. See also *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.331–2.
- 41 *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No.9*, p.1.
- 42 *OIG Report*, pp.295–6.
- 43 Quote in *ibid.*, p.296.
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp.345–56.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp.297–301.
- 46 *9/11 Commission Report*, p.271.
- 47 Janet Reno testimony to 9/11 Commission, 13 April 2004, p.5, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing10/reno_statement.pdf> (accessed 27 February 2006).
- 48 *OIG Report*, p.345.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p.346.
- 50 *Ibid.*, p.301. The agent had graduated from the FBI academy in June, 2000, and after serving brief stints on a number of different squads, was assigned to the bin Laden unit in July of 2001.
- 51 Hill, staff statement.
- 52 The memo went to the unit chief of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit, an analyst in the Radical Fundamentalist Unit, the acting unit chief of the Osama bin Laden unit, and three analysts in the Osama bin Laden Unit. *OIG Report*, p.65.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- 54 Kenneth J. Williams, Phoenix Memo, 10 July 2001, in Appendix 2, 'Phoenix EC', *OIG Report*, p.1.
- 55 *Joint Inquiry Report*, p. 326.
- 56 Williams, Phoenix Memo, p.2; *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.326.
- 57 *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.xiii.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p.80; *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No.10*, p.9.
- 59 *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No.10*, p.9.
- 60 Quote in *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.330.
- 61 *Ibid.*, pp.28, 332; Hill, staff statement. See also the testimony of Agent Williams before the SSCI and HPSCI Joint Inquiry hearing, 107th Cong., 2d sess., 24 September 2002.
- 62 *United States v Zacarias Moussaoui*, Crim. No. 1:01cr455 (E.D. Virginia 2005), <<http://i.cnn.net/cnn/2005/images/04/23/moussaoui.plea.transcript.pdf>> (accessed 28 February 2006). Although Moussaoui has admitted, and other evidence confirms, his participation in Al Qaeda and connection to other operatives in the 9/11 plot, it remains unclear whether Moussaoui was intended to be part of the original hijackings on 11 September or participate in a second round of attacks. See *9/11 Commission Report*, pp.245–7.
- 63 Hill, staff statement; *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.316–17. It should be noted that popular reports claimed Moussaoui was not interested in taking off or landing. The Joint Inquiry found the opposite to be true.
- 64 Quote from 18 August 2001 memorandum from FBI Minneapolis Field office to FBI Headquarters, in *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.319.
- 65 For details about FISA, see 'FBI Intelligence Investigations: Coordination within Justice on Counterintelligence Criminal Matters is Limited', US General Accounting Office, Report Number GAO-01-780, 16 July 2001.
- 66 The planner was Ramzi Binalshibh. For evidence of the connection in Moussaoui's belongings, see *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.324. For connections between Moussaoui and Binalshibh, see *9/11 Commission Report*, pp.161, 225, 243–50.
- 67 FBI lawyers working on the Moussaoui warrant told the Congressional Joint Inquiry that they were unaware of the Phoenix memo, and that inclusion of the memo would have made a stronger case for their warrant. See Hill, staff statement, p.15.
- 68 Millennium terrorist Ahmed Ressam was cooperating with US government officials at the time and subsequently identified Moussaoui as someone who had gone to one of Al Qaeda's Afghan training camps. See *9/11 Commission Report*, pp.276–7. The chief of the FBI's

- radical fundamentalist unit admitted to Congress that '[t]he photograph was not shown before 9/11 and it should have been'. *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.324.
- 69 Quote in *9/11 Commission Report*, p.258.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p.264.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p.259.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p.265. For specifics of Pickard's telephone calls, see 9/11 Commission Tenth Public Hearing, 'Law Enforcement and the Intelligence Community', 13 April 2004, transcript available at: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing10/9-11Commission_Hearing_2004-04-13.pdf> (accessed 27 February 2006), pp.84, 110–12.
- 73 *9/11 Commission Report*, p.265.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p.275. The Moussaoui investigation was known only to some agents in the Bureau's Oklahoma City field office who had been dispatched to Airman Flight School, which Moussaoui had previously attended. See Hill, staff statement.
- 75 *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.27.
- 76 *Ibid.*, p.27.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p.27.
- 78 The imam is named in the *9/11 Commission Report*, p.221.
- 79 *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.28. The 9/11 Commission reached no definitive conclusions about the relationship between al-Hazmi and the imam, but believes that their rendezvous in Virginia 'may not have been coincidental' (p.221).
- 80 Hill, staff statement, p.8; Morning session of HPSCI, SSCI Joint Inquiry hearing, 'Events Surrounding September 11', 107th Cong., 2d sess., 24 September 2002.
- 81 *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.25.
- 82 The Phoenix memo reached some officials in the New York field office and was forward to the Portland Office, which took no action. No other field offices received it. In fact, FBI Director Mueller explicitly told the Joint Inquiry: 'the Phoenix memo should have been disseminated to all field offices and to our sister agencies, and it should have triggered a broader analytical approach' (*Joint Inquiry Report*, p.330). The Moussaoui investigation was known by a handful of headquarters officials and some agents in the Bureau's Oklahoma City field office who had been dispatched to Airman Flight School, which Moussaoui had previously attended. See Hill, staff statement.
- 83 *OIG Report*, pp.303–4.
- 84 Unnamed Minneapolis agent, afternoon session of SSCI and HPSCI Joint Inquiry hearing, 'Events Surrounding September 11th', 107th Cong., 2d sess., 24 September 2002.
- 85 Quoted in *Joint Inquiry Report*, p.330.
- 86 Quote from FBI tactical analyst, *OIG Report*, p.66.
- 87 *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.266–7.
- 88 *Ibid.*, p.335.
- 89 Quoted in *ibid.*, p.61.
- 90 *Ibid.*, p. 57; Eleanor Hill testimony, morning session of a HPSCI and SSCI Joint Inquiry hearing, 'Events Surrounding September 11th'.
- 91 *Joint Inquiry Report*, pp.56–8.
- 92 For an example of Berger's charges, see Michael Elliott, 'They Had a Plan', *Time Magazine Special Report*, 12 August 2002, p.28. One year later, Albright told the *Los Angeles Times* editorial board in a taped conversation used for publication, 'I try very hard to stay out of the [debate over who's to blame for 9/11]...But when we did transition briefings, the Bush administration was not interested in what we were telling them about terrorism.' Editors, 'Sideline Diplomacy: Former Secretary Madeleine Albright on War, Peace, Terrorism', *The Los Angeles Times*, 2 November 2003, p.M.3.
- 93 See Condoleezza Rice, '9/11: For the Record', *Washington Post*, 22 March 2004, p.A21; Condoleezza Rice interview by Ed Bradley, '60 Minutes', CBS News, 28 March 2004; James Rosen, 'Cease-fire Ends; Blame Game Starts', *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 28 March 2004, p.1A.
- 94 See for example, David E. Rosenbaum, 'Traces of Terror: The Critics; Bush Allies Direct Heaviest Fire Against Both F.B.I. and C.I.A.', *New York Times*, 19 June 2002, p.A19; Richard C. Shelby, 'September 11 and the Imperative of Reform in the U.S. Intelligence Community',

Additional Views of Senator Richard C. Shelby, Vice Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Joint Inquiry Report, 10 December 2002, p.135.

- 95 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, reprint ed. (New York: Penguin, December 2004); Bill Gertz, *Breakdown: How America's Intelligence Failures Led to 9/11* (New York: Regnery, 2002); Ronald Kessler, *The CIA at War* (New York: St Martin's, 2003); Ronald Kessler, *The Bureau: The Secret History of the FBI* (New York: St. Martin's, 2003); Rich Lowry, *Legacy: Paying the Price of the Clinton Years* (New York: Regnery, 2003); John Miller, Chris Mitchell and Michael Stone, *The Cell: Inside the 9/11 Plot and Why the FBI and CIA Failed to Stop It* (New York: Hyperion, 2003); Gerald L. Posner, *Why America Slept: The Failure to Prevent 9/11* (New York: Random House, 2003); James Risen, *State of War: The Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006).
- 96 Gertz, pp.21–7.
- 97 Miller *et al.*, *The Cell*, pp.276–7. For an analysis of the 'creeping determinism' in many 9/11 accounts, see Malcolm Gladwell, 'Connecting the Dots: the Paradoxes of Intelligence Reform', *The New Yorker*, 10 March 2003, pp.83–9.
- 98 Bob Woodward, *The Commanders: The Pentagon and the First Gulf War, 1989–1991*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), p.34.
- 99 James Bamford, 'War of Secrets: Eyes in the Sky, Ears to the Wall, and Still Wanting', *New York Times*, 8 September 2002, Section 4, p.5.